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Statement submitted by Manavata, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

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Statement

This paper focuses on environmental sustainability, Millennium Development Goal 7, and Manavata's experience and results in transitioning it to a sustainable goal and makes five recommendations.

Manavata is born with the vision of creating sustainable development at the levels of individual, society and environment. As such a successful transition of Millennium Development Goal 7 is central to Manavata's mission. Manavata has successfully implemented a farming system called 'Zero Budget Natural Farming', pioneered by eminent agriculturist Subhash Palekar, and thus sees its critical relevance to environmental sustainability. Manavata has experientially found this system making a profound impact on the successful transition of other Millennium Development Goals as well, especially 1, 2, 4, and 5, to sustainable ones, due to their inter-relationships in Indian society.

The excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides for agriculture has devastated the soil biota, including earthworms, which is the lifeline of a sustainable soil ecosystem. In 2012, 13754 Indian farmers, unable to generate any healthy crops, and with debts mounting, resorted to suicide, in spite of investing heavily on fertilizers and pesticides. Zero Budget Natural Farming, the name itself implying zero production costs, takes away the traditional emphasis on investments in pesticides etc. to utilizing naturally available resources. It is based on the principle of allowing a group of plants to grow in a natural ecosystem thus ensuring required amount of sunlight, shade and nutrients in the soil. In 2014, our farm gave a rice yield of 2.17 tons/acre, with a savings of over $180/acre. Manavata has set up a farmer knowledge centre where farmers are trained freely on this farming system including soil preparation, preparing natural manure from cow dung and performing pest control using leaves of neem tree and other medicinal plants.

In order to shape this mission into a self-managed one and to make the goal's transition sustainable in the long term, Manavata is developing leaders among farmers. The challenges Manavata is working to overcome are training resources, consistency in methods and acceptance.

Based on our credible experience, as evidenced by the local State Government's recognition, we recommend the following:

(a) Educate the wider farming communities on the ease of implementation and benefits of sustainable methods like Zero Budget Natural Farming.

(b) Encourage Governments to develop indicators for soil biota and pesticide content and provide suitable incentives for continuous improvements on those, driven by environmentally sustainable methods.

(c) Recommend businesses to procure produce delivered by farms using environmentally sustainable practices.

(d) Act as a catalyst for further adoption of natural farming methods, by sharing those successes across the non-governmental organization network.

(e) Help develop local leaders to drive the transition of Millennium goals to sustainable goals.